



**INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS PERCEPTION  
ON IMPLEMENTATION OF FEDERAL CHARACTER  
PRINCIPLE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: A STUDY OF  
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract:**

This study probes the influence teachers' perception and implementation of federal character principle in Nigerian Universities: a study of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey research design. The sample size for this study is 200 academic staff (educators') of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The findings of research question one indicated that academic staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University agreed that the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with securing admission into federal university revealed that admission are not mostly done on merit and the quota system used in admission does not favour all applicants. The findings of this research question two found that most institutions do not comply with recruitment guidelines in the federal character principle document during recruitment, meritocracy or competencies are compromised in staff recruitment in Universities, vacancies are not advertised as stipulated in the federal character principle during staff recruitment, lobbying takes precedence in staff recruitment in universities, job description are not known during recruitment which is against the federal character principle statement etc. With reference to research question three, the findings indicated that most universities are being marginalized in fund allocation due to most Universities in disadvantaged states attract more funds than their counterparts in advantaged states, etc. According to research question four, the findings revealed that the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated

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with appointment of staff to managerial posts include; appointments into managerial positions does not reflect the country's diversity, the composition of positions are predominantly occupied by persons from few states, ethnicity and tribalism affects the appointment of persons into managerial posts, meritocracy is not considered during appointments and there is no equity in terms of access to be appointed in managerial positions. Finally, the findings of research question five, revealed that academic staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University did agree to the strategies for mitigating the challenges to the implementation of the federal character principle in federal universities in Nigeria. Based on the findings and educational implications of this study, the following recommendations are made. The quota system principle should be equitably considered to benefit all citizens as the case may be. The federal character principle should be applied the way the framers of the policy envisaged. Finally, the duties and responsibilities of every nation are to ensure equal educational opportunities to all the citizens of the country with no form of sentiment attached to such responsibilities.

**Keywords:** teachers, perception, implementation, Federal Character Principle, Nnamdi Azikiwe University

## 1. Introduction

Since creation, it has acknowledged that man has been faced with challenges of life. The challenge may come in the nature of health, finance, family management among others. As a country like Nigeria, there are still some challenges facing it like terrorism, poor administration, religious and economic crisis. All these show that challenges are inevitable in human sphere. However, educators may be defined as group of persons who have knowledge, skills and special trainings in teaching, explaining and educating students (Ammani, 2014). The educators are capable of creating behavioural change in terms of cognitive, psychomotor as well as affective domain. According to Senge (2002), educators are experts who are capable of imparting knowledge that will help learners to build, identify and to acquire skills and values that enhances development.

Federal universities can be seen as universities that are been established, controlled, funded, coordinated by the federal level of government. Nigeria has forty-three (43) federal universities across the country (<http://www.myschoolgist.com>, 2018). Federal character principle itself was an introduction of the 1979 Constitution as suggested by the constituent assembly. Architects of this Constitution were General Murtala Mohammed and Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo during their Military regime (Okolo, 2014). Beside state creation as a mechanism for maintaining unity in diversity, the late General Murtala Mohammed muted the idea of introducing the Federal Character in his address to the opening session of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1975 (Ammani, 2014). Federal Character Commission (FCC) was a Federal Executive body established by Act No 34 of 1996 to implement and enforce the Federal Character Principle of fairness and equity in the distribution of public posts

and socio-economic infrastructures among the various federating units of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Federal character principle was structured so as to address the challenges of imbalance and discrimination. According to Osman (2004), it was an effort to re-address the unbalanced structure and ethnic domination in government in order to achieve national integration. It was a deliberate attempt to ensure that representation in Government reflects the diversity of the people that constitutes the country (Okoli, 2004). This policy was adopted by the government on good intention in other to bring a balance in the recruitment of staff, giving of admissions, sharing of national or state allocations among others due to the plurality of Nigeria as a country. Some scholars have their views on the meanings of federal character principle after its introduction.

Federal character Principle in Nigeria is defined as the democratization of the public bureaucracy through the principle of representation as contained in the 1979 constitution of Nigeria (Okpata, 2011). According to Obiyan and Akindele (2002), federal character principle essentially refers to the recognition of the plural nature of the country in recruitment, distribution of administrative and political offices and power as well as their sources of the country. It is an integrative mechanism which is seen as fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's position of power, status and influence (Ojo, 2009). For Akpanabia (2012), federal character principle is a practice where every nationality is represented in all government owned institutions to ensure equity, fair-play and order. It is also defined as the means of modality for achieving fair representation among geo-political groups and ethno-religious and social groups existing in the country (Ezenwa, 2015).

The federal character principle was introduced to protect the right of the minority, accommodate the disadvantaged and ensure even distribution of resources among the various federating units. Ammani (2009) enthusiastically sum up the function of federal character in Nigeria which is to provide an equitable formula for the distribution of socio-economic service and infrastructural facilities; provides modalities for redressing imbalances; ensures equitable admission into federal universities; ensures that no one section of the society unduly dominates the elective positions among others. The policy was adopted by the government on good intention in other to bring a balance in the recruitment of staff, giving admissions, sharing of national or state allocations among others due to the plurality of Nigeria as a country. It is in most cases also referred to as quota system (Eke, 2003).

Many people have reacted in many ways as to its introduction. While some see it as a major move towards alleviating the minority fear and strengthening unity among the diverse people of Nigeria. Others see it as creation of permanent lines of division in the country. Some of these reactions are intellectual and some are stipulated and discussed on political terrain. Most times too, people's views are not detached totally from their background and condition which sharpens their perception of its needs. According to Osifeso (2011), posits that the federal character principle is engendering federal instability rather than integration that it was intended to serve. To him, the policy has merely promoted ethnic and sectional consciousness. He further argues that "*no unity*

*can result where the application of the principle discriminates against one group and favours another in abundance. So far, the application of the principle shows that it is not capable of resolving the problem of national suspicion among the ethnic groups. It has failed in its objective of redressing the imbalanced in the structure and ethnic domination in government and other public institutions so that national integration could be achieved"* (Osifeso, 2011). According to Ojo (2009), the federal character was supposed to benefit the underprivileged but rather has succeeded enriching the few of the dominant class in the country in giving admission into federal schools, recruitment of staff, revenue allocation among others.

On educational sector, Nigeria is made up of 36 states and admission into federal schools in the country is not based on merit alone but also on the principle of federal character with the aim of bringing about equalization of opportunity of the various states in education. While the states in the north are said to be backward and educationally disadvantaged, candidates in these states are given admission into federal schools with low scores. Candidates from states in the south are said to be in a vantage position as far as education is concerned and their cut-off marks for admission into the federal schools are always very high. A student from the south is expected to score at least 139 points to gain admission in school but a candidate from the north is required to score only two points from possible 200 (Adeosun, 2011). According to Okobiah (2014), the federal character principle has not improved the educational status of the north because the northern elites have not put in their best to change the attitudinal disposition of their youths towards the viability of western education.

Also, recruitment and appointment of staff in many higher institutions depends fully on your state of origin and not on capability and merit as federal character principle postulates. This is why major staff of different higher institutions is mostly populated by greater percentage of indigenes of such society or state that the institution is situated (Ezeibe, 2013). However, the implementation of the federal character principle since the introduction has appeared to be level by some challenges. This is because some ethnic groups believe that they are in the majority and so should appropriate the country's resources more than others. Again, some other ethnic groups may have more representation the government and therefore, they use that opportunity to appropriate resources. Moreover, there are certain challenges facing the implementation of federal character principle as a result of some factors such as religion, ethnicity or tribalism, mediocrity, etc.

Moreover, the challenges of federal character principle may be more than what have been mentioned above. In this study, the researchers sought to find out what educators' perceptions are as regards the challenges of federal character principle implementation in the educational system in Nnamdi Azikiwe University as a case study. The essence of this study is that a lot happen during admission of students, recruitment of staff and most essentially allocation of educational resources. It seems that some institutions, individuals and states are favored more than the other. It is true that the objective of the federal character principle is to ensure equal representation but it seems that some state or constitutions are more equal than the others and so educators are being

studied to know what their perceptions are since they are the implementers and key personality in the education system.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The perennial problem of imbalance in our national life has revolved around other sectors of the economy including political positions. One of these factors is the problem of misapplication of the federal character principles. There also exists the problem of merit displacement where mediocrity has been used in place of meritocracy in admission of students into the institution and appointment of staff into positions. Consequently, there has been gross misconduct in the area of employment due to sectional identity and nepotism by those in authority in the ministries and parastatals. Federal institutions seem to recruit on the basis of nepotism without minding the effect of such practices to the efficiency of service delivery and quality of output to the nation. Even when the federal character principle is observed, the institution will not consider efficiency of the candidate as long as they are relatives and will not follow the due process thereby cutting corners in the recruitment exercise. In all of these problems, the following research problem has to be asked or put forward. What are educators' perceptions on the challenges of the implementation of federal character principle in federal universities in Nigeria?

### **1.2 Research Questions**

The following research questions shall be answered at the end of the study which includes the following:

1. How has implementation of federal character principles affected admissions process in the Federal Universities in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges of implementation of federal character principles with staff recruitment?
3. What are the challenges of implementation of federal character principles with allocation of fund to institutions?
4. What are the challenges of implementation of federal character principles with appointments of staff to managerial posts?
5. What are the strategies for mitigating challenges to the implementation of the federal character principles in federal Universities in Nigeria?

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study is limited to educators' perception on the challenges of the implementation of the Federal character principle in federal Universities in Nigeria. Lecturers/ educators in Nnamdi Azikiwe University will be used for the study.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Perception or what other scholars refer to as social perception has been defined in a variety of ways since its first usage. However, many social psychologists have tended to develop the concept around one of its most essential characteristics that the world around is not psychologically uniform to all individual. This is the fact, in all probability, that accounts for the differences in the opinion and actions of individuals or groups that are exposed to the same social phenomenon. At this point, it is important for you to take a look at some of these definitions in order to better appreciate the point being made here:

Social perception refers to constructing an understanding of the social world from the data we get through our sense (Michener, Delamater & Myers, 2004). Thus, to them perception refers to the process by which we form impressions of other peoples' traits and personalities. According to Yolanda (2018), perception can be defined as our recognition and interpretation of sensory information. Perception also includes how we respond to the information or we can also think of perception as a process where we take in sensory information from our environment and use that information in order to interact with our environment. Perception allows us to take the sensory information in and make from it something meaningful. From our own understanding, we could say that perception is the organisation, identification and interpretation of sensory information gotten from the environment. However, having seen briefly the concept of perception, we shall move ahead to look at the concept of implementation below.

The term or concept of implementation is the carrying out, execution, or practise of a plan, a method or any design, idea, model, specification, standards or policy for doing something (Rouse, 2015). As, such, implementation is the action that must follow any preliminary thinking in order for something to actually happen. For us, implementation can simply mean or is a process of moving an idea from concept to reality.

The phrase "Federal Character" came after a number of debates and dialogue that ensured the members of constitutional drafting committee (CDC) inaugurated by General Murtala Ramat Mohammed military administration on the 18 October, 1975 to draft a new constitution with democratic face of Nigeria. The committee thus adopted the phrase "federal character" as the viable means of ensuring ethnic balancing in federation activities and therefore defined the federal character as "*distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nations notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish, harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*". The phrase "federal character" was however incorporated in the 1979, 1989 and subsequently in section 14(3) (4) of the 1999 constitution.

Ayaode (2003) viewed federal character as an instrument of eclectic redistribution of bureaucratic roles and industrial sites. He went a bit further to say that federal

character is based on the recognition of ethnic difference. However, federal character in a simple parlance connotes a policy employed by multi-ethnic society with federal arrangement to reduce to the barest minimum the manifestation and even the latent marginalization in its entire ramification and then attain fair or proportionate participation of the section, segments and ethnic groups in the running of the state so that harmonious co-existence and national cohesion will prevail. Federal character formula as applied in Nigeria shows that it has a seed of discord especially with mix-reaction over it as a viable measure to attaining fairness particularly in terms of ethnic representation in sharing resources, allocating governments establishments, employment, admission of students in federal institution and the likes.

From the above scenario, it is necessary to note that the use of any criteria whatsoever in place of merit or the use of merit in place of any criteria already adopted by the commission will jeopardize the need why it was established or conceived. Therefore, it is worthwhile to work round the clock to strike a balance between the criteria currently in operation and merit. This may be arrived at by selecting the best from the available ones in each of the ethnic groups or section in terms of employment or recruitment of staff, admission of students into federal institutions, etc.

In a nutshell, this research work has to do with the challenges on the implementation of federal character principle in the Federal Universities. Notably, the different ethnic groups, regions and subsequently states that have existed and exist in Nigeria developed at varying pace in different sectors and the education sector is not an exception. Since the British government stepped in to educate Nigerians as clerical staff to help in keeping the colony in a subordinate position for colonial continual exploitation, Nigeria has continued to struggle for this limited chance for education. Meanwhile, the significance of education is outstanding as educational attainment has a correlation with occupation of top economic and political positions in the public and private lives in 1955 and 1957, both the western and eastern region respectively introduced the universal primary education while the north was entirely left out. By independence, education has become an issue for the federating units in Nigeria. In 1974, the National policy on education (NPE) was formed; the main thrust of education was to achieve integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizenry and equal educational opportunities for all citizens in primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Hence, the aim of this outfit was to inculcate national consciousness and national unity, the rights type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society (Adamu, 1978). Again, deliberate attempt has been made to institutionalize the federal character principle in Nigeria's public affairs. In the educational sector where for instance, the northern Nigeria is obviously disadvantaged while the south is advantaged, a policy is often recommended to right this wrong.

Buggs (2002) argued that the panacea for the inequality lay in adoption of the federal character principle in staffing, locating schools and admission of students into schools. Thus, he recommended one state one university in Nigeria. Today, more students are admitted in Nigerian universities based on the logic of locality and

educationally less developed states than those admitted on the basis of merit resulting to imbalance both in admission and in Nigerian educational sector in general.

Federal universities can be seen as universities that are been established, controlled, funded, coordinated by the federal level of government. Nigeria has forty-three (43) federal universities across the country (<http://www.myschoolgist.com>, 2018). However, Nnamdi Azikiwe University as the scope of this study is one of the federal universities in Nigeria. Also, in the understanding of the concept “federal universities” more, we shall look at the concept of educational system below.

The concept of educational system cannot be understood without a brief introduction on the concept of education. Therefore, the fundamental question now is what we mean by education? Education is a word we are familiar with in everyday life, because education is an important activity undertaken by almost all members of society. The term education has different meaning; each person interprets the word in terms of his or her past experience, his needs and purposes. The parents, the teachers, administrators, religious leaders, politicians and artists interpret the term education in their own ways. For example, to a student, education means acquisition of knowledge, receiving a degree or diploma. A Statesman may claim that it is the means to train individuals as ideal citizens. A teacher may interpret education as means for creation of a new man and new society (Puja, 2018).

Etymologically speaking, the word education is derived from the Latin word “educare” meaning “to raise” and “to bring up”. These meanings indicate that education seeks to nourish the good qualities and draw out the best in every individual. The meaning of education of the root words lead us to believe that education aims to provide a nourishing environment that would facilitate or bring out and develop the potentialities in an individual. However, the meaning of education is not farfetched; it has been defined by different educationists. Ukeje (2004) defined education as the “*process by which people are acclimatised to the culture into which they are born in order that they may advance it*”. Again, Okafor (2003) defined education as “*a process of acculturation of his or her potentials through which the individuals are helped to attain the development of his or her potentialities and their maximum activation when necessary according to right reasons and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfilment*”. He also regards education not as casual experience, but as a process deliberately planned and methodically applied. Generally, it can be obtained that education is concerned with the cultivation of the whole person-physical, intellectual, moral, social and emotional development; education could also mean the process of not only teaching the culture (way of life) of the people but also that of preservation and upgrading it so as to improve the welfare of man (Onwuka, 2011).

Furthermore, an educational system includes all institutions which are concerned with the education of children, young persons and adult, particularly, preschool/kindergarten, nursery school, primary school, secondary schools, vocational schools and on tertiary level. We have colleges of education, polytechnics and universities and also institutions of adult education like adult education Centres. In



conclusion, educational system in this research work will be based on higher or tertiary institutions universities specifically Nnamdi Azikiwe University to be precise.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

### **2.2.1 Group theory by Bentley (1980)**

One of the theoretical frameworks of this study is the Group theory of policy making as propounded by Bentley (1980). He conceived group as a mass of activity, and not merely a collection of individuals. To him also, group can be seen as a certain portion of men of a society, taking not as a physical mass cut off from the masses of men, but as a mass of activity, which do not preclude the men who participate in it from participating likewise in many other group activities. The main premise of the theory is that every society has a large number of groups which engaged in a perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other. The theory emphasizes on the group as the basic unit in the study of politics. The theorist views demand as diffused among many interest groups who are competing against each other for power. So in connection with the federal character principle, it has to do with the views of collective individuals or group of persons and not on individuals note concerning government's policy on matters affecting them as a group or entity which the government at the adoption of the federal character principle is persuaded to consider to ensure national unity and security. These groups' opinions or demands may be pointing to admission of more students from their ethnic group, employment of staff from their religion or even allocation of fund to institution based on familiarity, which when recognized or taken into play by the government will facilitate national unity and will promote the effectiveness of federal character principle in the education system.

### **2.2.2 System Theory by David Easton (1940)**

A system is the assemblages of parts that function as a whole; that is, they seem to function with identifiable purpose. The Systems theory was propounded by David Easton in 1940. The theory attempts to view the organization or state as a unified, purposeful system composed of interrelated parts. The theory is of the view that the activity of any part of a state or geographical location affects another as it advocates for uniformity at all cost. No side should be favoured in terms of development or establishment in relegation of another. So in relating the Systems theory in this study, the various groups or ethnics that make up Nigeria as a federation should be seen and treated as a whole thereby promoting equity and fairness among Nigerian people for which purpose, the principle of federal character was initially initiated. So in relating this systems theory with this study, it calls for admission of students from every part of the country irrespective of the tribe, religion etc, employment or promotion of staff, allocation of fund to different institutions by the government should be treated or handled with uniformity trait so as to usher in equality without fear or favour, this will encourage equal opportunity and bring unity into the system.

### 2.3 Empirical Literature

Okeke (2019) examined the implementation and enforcement of the federal character principle in the political governance of Nigeria so as to ascertain the reason why the principle is more honoured in breach than in observation. The research methodology adopted by the researcher was purely doctrinal whereas the approaches employed herein are chiefly analytical, descriptive and prescriptive. This study found that the principle of federal character is subject to persistent abuse because it is contained in Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution, as amended which is ordinarily non-justiciable. On the alternative, this study made a case for the amendment of the Constitution so as to make the federal character principle wholly justiciable. On the other hand, this study identified the various ways of enforcing compliance with the federal character principle notwithstanding its non-justiciable status.

Okpala, Ude and Echefu (2019) examined the federal character principles in Nigerian public services exercise towards output efficiency at the national planning commission (NPC) its relationship with the recruitment exercise in the public service. This was prompted by the fact that there is growing disenchantment in some quarters about the implementation of the federal character principle, which they believe leads to the violation of the merit principle and lowering of standards in the recruitment of personnel into the public service which will serve as a way of recruiting and promoting less competent staff into the service resulting inevitably to poor performance. In conclusion the study agrees that recruitment exercise in NPC Abuja is based on federal character principle, the application of federal character principle system jeopardize the merit in the recruitment exercise at NPC Abuja. The work attempted to uncover the critical issue involved in the federal character principle system through the review of related literature on the functions of the federal character commission, composition and powers of the commission, general principle and formulae for recruitment process, federalism and the federal structure of Nigeria etc. From the finding of the research work the researcher discovered that the federal character principle system has some deficiencies. The actual application of the federal character principle negates the merit system of civil/public service in which the NPC is not an exception since appointments and promotion are not always based on merit. However, Okpala, *et al.*, (2019) recommended that the application of merit system or meritocracy should become the Linchpin in the recruitment of personnel into the Nigerian public service in order not to endanger standards and professionalism. It was also recommended that there is the need to strike a balance between the applications of federal character principle in public services.

Olasunkanmi and Agulanna (2018) interrogated federal character principle (FCP) in Nigeria. The FCP was designed to fundamentally address the striking features of Nigeria politics of intense struggles for power among the different ethnic groups in the country between the elites from the North and their Southern counterparts and the various segments, but the practice of FCP in Nigeria so far raises curiosity and doubts. Given the outcome of the interrogation, this research work discovered and conclude that

federal character has not indeed achieve its objective in the Nigeria, the study finds that Ethnocentrism, Elitism, Mediocrity, Mutual suspicion amongst others accounts for some inhibiting factors of the FCP in Nigeria. Like many other provisions of the Constitution, the Federal Character principle was meant to correct some imbalances experienced in the past, but it has created more problems than it has attempted to solve. Rather than promote national unity, it has disunited Nigerians. However, Olasunkanmi and Agulanna (2018) recommended that there is an urgent need to use more of professionals and result oriented Nigerians to carry out national tasks, than to use unprogressive people due to this "Federal character" issue. Nigeria should be a place where one's track records and qualifications are far greater than just "where they come from" or their lineage if Nigerian truly want to progress.

Furthermore, evidence abound that Nigeria's form of federal system has been grappling with serious working and institutional challenges. Nkwede, Dauda and Orija (2018) interrogated contending issues ravaging Nigeria's federal polity with a clarion call for timely adoption of neo-federalism paradigm. It employed qualitative research method with classical model of federalism as framework of analysis. The study established that Nigeria's federal republic is associated with over-concentration of governmental powers at the centre, sectional domination of powers and political leadership, inept and corrupt leadership/bad governance, socio-economic crisis, insecurity, corruption, favouritism and nepotism, problem of power sharing and poor implementation of federal character principle, which further heightened the delivery of socio-economic services and democratic dividends to the people. However, Nkwede, Dauda and Orija (2018) concluded that for Nigeria's federation to stand the test of time and overcome myriad problems it is currently facing, embracing the neo-federalism paradigm is inevitable.

Onimisi, Samsu, Ismail and Mohd Nor (2017) probe the role of civil society in the application of the federal character policy in Nigeria is the focus of this study, with emphasis on the opportunities and constraints that civil societies face in promoting and ensuring the adherence of the policy in the country. Considering the fact that task of policy application would become a mirage if the government isolates the civil society whose conspicuous role in the overall adherence of the policy cannot be overemphasized. And in order to achieve the objectives of this study, secondary source of data was used with content analysis. The study discovers that civil society in Nigeria remains an important and crucial stakeholder in the application of the federal character policy especially in the area of advocacy and policy orientation. However, the efforts of the civil society are being hampered by some constraints like lack of strong constitutional recognition and finance challenges amongst other. Hence Onimisi, *et al.*, (2017) recommends a constitutional role for the civil society and financial support in the overall interest of achieving the policy objectives of the Federal character.

According to Udebu, Uchealor and Udoh (2011) carried out a research on the problems associated with quota system in Nigerian educational system. The research design adopted by the researcher in the study was descriptive survey research design.

The population used in the study was 350 people of whom they consist of lecturers and students, number of students only was not mentioned so also the number of lecturers, but the students consists of 89% while the lecturers consist 11%. The researcher made use of proportionate stratified random sampling because the sample or the population was grouped in terms of two or more groups (lecturers and students) of interest to the researchers; the method of data collection was a structured questionnaire which was administered personally by the researchers on the respondents directly in various departments and offices. The method of data analysis used was the arithmetic mean. The findings of the study among others were that the introduction of quota system brought about marginalization in terms of admission, decaying standard of education in Nigeria among others. The recommendation in the study was that the duties and the responsibilities of every nation are to ensure equal educational opportunities to all the citizens of the country with no form of sentiment attached to such responsibilities. However, the reviewed study is similar to this current research work because it's based on the problems associated with quota system in Nigerian educational system while the present study is on the challenges of federal character principle which quota system is part of, the two work is trying to make sure that merit principle or rather quota system is being applied irrespective of religion, ethnic group, etc. be it in the educational system or sector. Also, looking at the difference between the two works, the reviewed work made use of both lecturers and students in analysing the problems in the educational system while this current research work is trying to make use of lecturers only to figure out the challenges of the implementation of federal character principle of educational system.

Tukur (2015) carried out a study on a critical assessment of the recruitment exercise in the public service, a study of Federal Inland Revenue (FIRS) Sokoto State. The type of research design use is survey design. The population of this research work constitutes an aspect of the employees at the federal Inland Revenue service (FIRS) Sokoto being the organization under study. A total of 50 employees that constituted the population of the organization were used for the study, purposively, meaning that no sampling was done. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaires which were administered to some of the staff of the FIRS. The method of data analysis; the type of statistical technique used for hypothesis testing is chi-square. The findings of the study were that the federal character principle and quota system has some deficiencies. The actual application of the federal principle negates the merit system of civil/public service in which the firms is not an exception since appointments and promotions are not always based on merit. The application of federal character principle and quota system on recruitment process in FIRS Sokoto, is having implications on the recruitment exercise, it improves workers experience. The federal character commission does not properly supervise the application of the federal character principle and quota system in the recruitment process at FIRS, Sokoto.

### 3. Research Method

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey design according to Nworgu (2015), are those studies which aim at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This design was chosen because a group of lecturers could be studied by collecting and analysing of data collected from only a few that will represent the entire population. This is most appropriate for the purpose of this study because it aims at collecting data on and describing the data collected in a systematic way about Educators' Perception on the challenges affecting the implementation of Federal Character Principle in Nigerian Universities using Nnamdi Azikiwe University as case study.

The population of the study consists of 5037 (Academic planning unit, 2019) academic staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. This number of staff was gotten from the fifteen (15) faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University which include Education, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Arts, Agricultural Sciences, Engineering, Vocational Teacher Education etc. The sample size for this study is 200 academic staff (educators') of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Multi types of sampling technique will be used for the study. These include simple random sampling and cluster sampling. Simple random sampling because each element in the population has equal and independent chance of being selected and cluster sampling, because the population will be divided into units called clusters. Firstly, simple random sampling was used to select four faculties (Education, Social Sciences and Arts) out of the fifteen (15) faculties from Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Secondly, cluster sampling will be used to sample 50 lecturers from the four faculties. This gives the researcher a total of 200 lecturers which will be used for the study.

The instrument to be used for data collection for this study will be structured questionnaire. The title of the questionnaire is "Questionnaire on Educators' perception on the challenges to the implementation of federal character principle", (QEPCIFCP). The questionnaire comprises of two sections A and B. Section A contains bio data of the respondent while section B dealt with the questionnaire items. The items were arranged in clusters, from cluster 1 to 5, cluster 1 comprises nine(9) items, cluster 2 contains eleven (11) items, cluster 3 contains five (5) items, cluster 4 contains five (5) items and finally clusters 5 contains five (5) items. However, each cluster addressed each of the research questions. The response options used in the questionnaire is like a scale; strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. To ascertain the validity of the questionnaire used for this study, the constructed instrument was given to one lecturer in measurement and evaluation unit and two lecturers in political science education unit all in the department of social science education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The validators were requested to check the face validity, language structure, and to ascertain that the items measure what they design to measure considering the research questions. The corrections suggested by the validators were affected before the final production of the instrument.

To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the instrument was administered to 20 lecturers from two other federal universities, Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Federal University of Ndufo-Alike, Ikwo, Ebonyi state. The test of reliability was done using Cronbach alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.88 was realized which shows that the instrument is reliable, whereas the cluster to cluster coefficients are; cluster 1 .711 and .722, cluster 2, .872 and .876, cluster 3 is .579 and .420, cluster 4 is .678 and .696 and finally cluster 5 which is .954 and .959. Mean and standard deviation will be used to analyse the data that will be collected to provide answers to the research questions formulated for the study. Based, on the four points scale, a mean scale of 2.50 will be used as the benchmark of the study. Therefore, any items that scored below 2.50 will be rejected while the items that scored 2.50 and above will be accepted. The method of data collection used for this study is structured or fixed response questionnaire. The questionnaires will be administered personally to the educators in their various offices to ensure 100% return of the instrument.

#### 4. Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

This section deals with the presentation of results and analysis of data. The analysis was done with reference to the five research questions formulated for the study.

**Research Question One:** How has implementation of federal character principles affected admissions process in the Federal Universities in Nigeria?

**Table 1:** Mean score of the effect of implementation of federal character principles on securing admission into Federal University

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Admissions are not mostly done on merit.	3.21	<b>Accept</b>
2	The quota system used in admission does not favor all applicants.	3.31	<b>Accept</b>
3	The quota system is more favorable to the northerners than those other regions.	3.20	<b>Accept</b>
4	The implementation of federal character principle undermines the admission into courses of interest by merit.	2.96	<b>Accept</b>
5	The implementation of federal character principle encourages fair implementation of all states in the admission process.	2.71	<b>Accept</b>
6	Admission procedures are equitable among federating units in terms of course programs.	2.56	<b>Accept</b>
7	Federal character principle implementation does not consider eligibility of candidate for admission.	2.70	<b>Accept</b>
8	The percentage of people from catchment area are so low that it unites them from being admitted.	2.77	<b>Accept</b>
9	The percentage of candidates admitted on merit are being low.	3.04	<b>Accept</b>
	Pooled Mean: 2.94 Agree 44		

**Source:** Author's Compilation, 2020.

Table 1 shows the mean ratings of challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with securing admission into federal university. Results indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, had ratings of 3.21, 3.31, 3.20, 2.96, 2.71, 2.56, 2.70, 2.77 and 3.04 respectively. This shows that all the items had mean values of 2.50 and above. Since the values are above 2.50 for decision taking, it implies that all items were accepted as the challenges of implementation of federal character principle.

**Research Questions Two:** What are the challenges of implementation of federal character principle on staff recruitment?

**Table 2:** Mean score of challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with staff recruitment

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Most institution do not comply with recruitment guidelines in the federal character principle document during recruitment.	3.35	Accept
2	Meritocracy or competencies are compromised in staff recruitment in universities.	3.20	Accept
3	Vacancies are not advertised as stipulated in the federal character principle during staff recruitment.	3.21	Accept
4	Lobbing takes precedence in staff recruitment in universities.	3.26	Accept
5	Job description are not known during recruitment which is against the federal character principle statement.	2.98	Accept
6	Interviews which should be conducted before recruitment as in the federal character principle decree are not done after recruitment.	2.77	Accept
7	State representation are ignored during recruitments.	2.72	Accept
8	There is no equitable and fairness in representation of various groups in the civil services.	3.14	Accept
9	Recruitment of staff is not guided by merit.	3.23	Accept
10	The application of federal character principle on staff recruitment has resulted to poor appointment which affects effectiveness.	3.20	Accept
11	The ethnic region of a person is the key factor in determining quality of an individual.	2.46	Reject
	Pooled Mean: 3.05 Agree		

**Source:** Author's Compilation, 2020.

Table 2 shows the mean rating of challenges of implementation of federal character principle associated with staff recruitment. Results indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 had rating of 3.35, 3.20, 3.21, 3.26, 2.98, 2.77, 2.72, 3.14, 3.23, 3.20 and 2.46 respectively. These shows that all the items except item 11 have mean value of 2.50 and above and so, were accepted as challenges associated with federal character principle with respect to recruitment. Item 11 is with mean value of 2.46 which is below the mean benchmark and so was not accepted as one of the challenges associated with recruitment.

**Research Questions Three:** What are the challenges of implementation of federal character principle associated with allocation of fund to institution?

**Table 3:** Mean score of the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with allocation of fund to institution

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Most universities in disadvantaged states attract more funds than their counterparts in advantaged states.	3.04	<b>Accept</b>
2	The allocation of resources to universities are politically determined and not as stipulated in the policy document of federal character principle.	3.14	<b>Accept</b>
3	Most universities are being marginalized in fund allocation due to ethnical differences.	3.04	<b>Accept</b>
4	There is no equity in disbursement of fund to higher institutions.	3.09	<b>Accept</b>
5	Projects for institutions are attracted on political bases not as reflected in the federal character principle.	3.14	<b>Accept</b>
Pooled Mean: 3.09 Agree			

**Source:** Author's Compilation, 2020.

Table 3 shows the mean rating of challenges of implementation of federal character principle associated with associated with allocation of fund to institution. Result indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 had rating of 3.04, 3.14, 3.04, 3.09 and 3.16 respectively. This shows that all the items have mean value of 2.50 and above and so were all accepted.

**Research Questions Four:** What are the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with appointment of managerial post?

**Table 4:** Mean score of the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with appointment of managerial post

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Appointments into managerial positions does not reflect the country's diversity.	3.04	<b>Accept</b>
2	The composition of positions is predominantly occupied by persons from few states.	3.14	<b>Accept</b>
3	Ethnicity and tribalism affect the appointment of persons into managerial posts.	3.04	<b>Accept</b>
4	Meritocracy is not considered during appointments.	3.09	<b>Accept</b>
5	There is no equity in terms of access to be appointed in managerial positions.	3.14	<b>Accept</b>
Pooled Mean: 3.15 Agree			

**Source:** Author's Compilation, 2020.

Table 4 shows the mean rating of challenges of implementation of federal character principle associated with appointment of managerial post. Result indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 had rating of 3.04, 3.14, 3.04, 3.09 and 3.16 respectively. This shows that all the items have mean value of 2.50 and above. Since all the values are above 2.50 for decision taking, it implies that the challenges of implementation of federal character principle associated with appointment of managerial post were all accepted.



**Research Questions Five:** What are the strategies for mitigating the challenges to the implementation of the federal character principle in federal character principle in federal universities in Nigeria?

**Table 5:** Mean score of strategies for mitigating the challenges to the implementation of the federal character principle in federal universities in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	The quota system principle should be equitably considered to benefit all citizens as the case may be.	3.51	<b>Accept</b>
2	The federal character principle should be applied the way the framers of the policy envisaged.	3.27	<b>Accept</b>
3	Mediocrity should not take over meritocracy in the implementation of the federal character principle both in student's admission and recruitment.	3.40	<b>Accept</b>
4	There should be a combination of merit and federal character principle in the appointment of officers in civil service in Nnamdi Azikiwe University to ensure efficiency.	3.41	<b>Accept</b>
5	The government should ensure equitable provision of infrastructure in universities and remove the appellation of disadvantaged states.	3.47	<b>Accept</b>
Pooled Mean: 3.41 Agree			

**Source:** Author's Compilation, 2020.

Table 5 shows the mean rating of strategies for mitigating the challenges to the implementation of the federal character principle in federal universities in Nigeria challenges. Result indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 had rating of 3.51, 3.27, 3.40, 3.41 and 3.47 respectively. This shows that all have mean value of 2.50 and above. Since all the values are above 2.50 for decision taking, it implies that the strategies for mitigating the challenges to the implementation of the federal character principle in federal universities in Nigeria were accepted.

## 5. Discussion of Results

The findings of research question one indicated that academic staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University did agree that the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with securing admission into federal university are Admissions are not mostly done on merit. The quota system used in admission does not favour all applicants. The quota system is more favourable to the north region than those other regions. The implementation of federal character principle undermines the admission into courses of interest by merit; Federal character principle implementation does not consider eligibility of candidate for admission. The percentage of people from catchment areas is so low that it limits them from being admitted. The percentage of candidates admitted on merit is being low. These findings agree with the opinion of Ayoade (2003) contend that federal character is a device for ventilating or arising historical wrongs. Also, Onwubiko (2014) sees it as gross injustice for the federal government to use the collective resources to run

the educational institutions only to deny the brilliant and serious minded candidates of admission into higher institutions to actualize their dreams.

The findings of this study with respect to research question two showed that some academic staff of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University responded that the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with staff recruitment include; most institutions do not comply with recruitment guidelines in the federal character principle document during recruitment, meritocracy or competencies are compromised in staff recruitment in universities, vacancies are not advertised as stipulated in the federal character principle during staff recruitment, lobbying takes precedence in staff recruitment in universities, job description are not known during recruitment which is against the federal character principle statement, interviews which should be conducted before recruitment as in the federal character principle decree are done after recruitments, state representation are ignored during recruitments, there is no equitable and fairness in representation of various groups in the civil services recruitment of staff is not guided by merit, the application of federal character principle on staff recruitment has resulted to poor appointment which affects effectiveness, the ethnic region of a person is the key factor in determining quality of an individual. Moreover, the findings are in agreement with the opinion of Agbodike (2003), where he noted that one of the major and most problematic features of federal character principle, as presently operated in the complexity of the interests and sections as represented by the North, South, state, local government, ethnic and religious group affiliations. Also, Ojiake (2008) opines that people from less advance education states reap the benefit while those from educationally developed parts or states condemned it as a whole and deem it as an enemy of national unity and progress.

With reference to research question three, the findings indicated that most academic staff of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University agreed that the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with allocation of fund to institution include; most universities are being marginalized in fund allocation due to most universities in disadvantaged states attract more funds than their counterparts in advantaged states, the allocation of resources to universities are politically determined and not as stipulated in the policy document of federal character principle ethnical differences, there is no equity in disbursement of fund to higher institutions, projects for institutions are attracted on political bases not as reflected in the federal character principle. This view was also buttressed by Masari (2006) noted that the principles federal character contained by the constitution has been thoroughly and seriously abused by several government establishments thus causing havoc to the unity of the country and its peaceful co-existence in a bid to build strong and virile nation where no group will be heard crying for marginalization or neglecting. Also, Agbodike (2003) says that discrimination is one of the paradoxes of federal character principle, whereby instead of attaining unity via balancing, the country is further segregated

The findings of this study with respect to research question four, showed that the challenges of implementation of federal character principles associated with

appointment of staff to managerial posts include; appointments into managerial positions does not reflect the country's diversity, the composition of positions are predominantly occupied by persons from few states, ethnicity and tribalism affects the appointment of persons into managerial posts, meritocracy is not considered during appointments and there is no equity in terms of access to be appointed in managerial positions. These findings are in agreement with the opinion of Adesoji and Alao (2009) argued that the principle promotes mediocrity at the expense of merit particular with the abuse that characterize its application in civil service appointment, promotion, admission into school and so on, then it could be seen as a solution that has become problematic. Also, Abubakar (2003) contended that the application of federal character principle in Nigeria has brought about poor appointment at managerial posts and boards of federal parastatal as well as promoting mediocrity at the expense of meritocracy.

Moreover, the findings of research question five, show that academic staff of Nnamdi Azikiwe University did agree to the strategies for mitigating the challenges to the implementation of the federal character principle in federal universities in Nigeria which include that; the quota system principle should be equitably considered to benefit all citizens as the case may be, the federal character principle should be applied the way the framers of the policy envisaged, mediocrity should not take over meritocracy in the implementation of the federal character principle both in student's admission and recruitment, there should be a combination of merit and federal character principle in the appointment of officers in civil service in Nnamdi Azikiwe University to ensure efficiency, the government should ensure equitable provision of infrastructure in universities and remove the appellation of disadvantaged states. These findings come into agreement with the view of Majekodunmi (2013), where he was of the belief that the establishment of the principle by the successive governments in country was to address and mitigate the problem of marginalization in order to ensure a peaceful, stable and united Nigeria. Izah (2003) says that federal character is mainly concerned with providing each part of the country with adequate representation in the entire sphere of government establishment.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study is to determine the educators' perception on the challenges of federal character principle in educational system in Nigeria: a case study of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The study documented among others that there are challenges to the implementation of federal character principle in the educational system in Nigeria with regard to research question one which is challenges associated with securing admission into federal university which are Admissions are not mostly done on merit; the quota system used in admission does not favour all applicants among others challenges.

With regard to research question two which has to do with challenges associated with staff recruitment, thus; most institutions do not comply with recruitment guidelines in the federal character principle document during recruitment, Meritocracy or

competencies are compromised in staff recruitment in universities among others. More so, with regard to research question three which deals with challenges associated with allocation of fund to institutions, thus; most universities in disadvantaged states attract more funds than their counterparts in advantaged states, the allocation of resources to universities are politically determined and not as stipulated in the policy document of federal character principle ethnic differences among others.

With regard to research question four which has to do with the challenges associated appointment of managerial post include; Appointment to managerial positions does not reflect the country's diversity, Meritocracy is not considered during appointments, There is no equity in terms of access to be appointed in managerial positions and others Finally, The educators also agreed that the solutions to all these challenges with regard to research question five are: The quota system principle should be equitably considered to benefit all citizens as the case may be, The federal character principle should be applied the way the framers of the policy envisaged and others.

Based on the findings and educational implications of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The quota system principle should be equitably considered to benefit all citizens as the case may be. Also, Federal character principle should be applied the way the framers of the policy envisaged.
2. Mediocrity should not take over meritocracy in the implementation of the federal character principle both in student's admission and recruitment.
3. There should be a combination of merit and federal character principle in the appointment of officers in civil service in Nnamdi Azikiwe University to ensure efficiency.
4. The government should ensure equitable provision of infrastructure to Universities and remove the appellation of disadvantaged states. There should be equal educational funding in all the sections of the country.
5. The strengths and limitations of educational policies in Nigeria should be properly examined and checked during implementation and before approval. Finally, the duties and responsibilities of every nation is to ensure equal educational opportunities to all the citizens of the country with no form of sentiment attached to such responsibilities.

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